

8/27/72

Dear Sylvia,

I've heard nothing about your condition since your niece wrote me that you would not be able to rent a summer-house this year. I hope you are doing well. I have been extremely busy with my book, and have almost a month's accumulation of mail which I've not yet answered. In a week I return to school.

Today the Times gave page-one coverage to Wecht's monumental irresponsibility and dishonesty. I am writing you as a matter of record and for your information. This is indeed a disagreeable matter for any responsible assassination critic, and I hope the state of your health is not such that the reality of this matter will upset you or prevent you from understanding and analyzing it.

First, let me give you a little backgrounding of things that have happened since we were out of touch. Wecht wrote me soliciting "suggestions" and inviting me to a mish-mosh meeting of "critics" to "digest what he saw at the Archives. I absolutely refused to be part of the meeting, and told him that I had decided there was really no way anyone could brief him before he went in to see the materials. I wrote him some cautions, and I set forth my position vis a vis what he was about to do, inviting discussion.

When he saw my letter to Wecht, Harold suggested that there was a way that I could help Cyril conduct a productive, responsible examination, and he made several suggestions to me. What he suggested were things I had originally thought of, but then ~~had~~ abandoned as I became more and more convinced that Wecht did not have serious, responsible intents. Nevertheless, after receiving Harold's letter, I decided that I should speak to Cyril to find out what he planned to do when he saw this stuff, to see if he was willing to listen to me over those CTIA nuts, and, if so, to help him. I called his office; he was out of town, expected back the next day, so his secretary took a message. He never called me back.

In the meantime, Dick Bernabei had written Cyril, quite independently of me, and told him that he felt no briefing was necessary, and he strongly advised Cyril that I was the only person competent to give him reliable advice and assistance.

I learned from Harold, who got it second-hand, that Wecht had invited such experts as Jerry (who is in Europe, I think) and Dick Sprague to be among his trusted advisers.

In three weeks, Cyril never called me. I note too that he did not call me when you asked him to.

Judging from the Times article, there is nothing I could have done to stop Wecht in the pursuit of his craziness. Even the caution I expressed in my letter he did not heed.

The lies I expected are in the article, but there are also many unwelcome unexpected lies. Right at the beginning, we read that JFK's brain has been suppressed "apparently by the Kennedy family." And who spoke for the family? Burke Marshall, who is falsely ~~referred~~ referred to as "a representative of the Kennedy family." More suppression is falsely heaped on the Kennedys.

Marion Johnson is quoted as saying that the memo of transfer is being suppressed "at the behest of the Kennedy family." This is a lie.

This business with the tissue slides really betrays Wecht's competence. According to Graham, Wecht said the slides will show for sure if the shots came from the rear. That is at best an irresponsible statement. For how can Wecht prove that a slide labeled "Specimen from rear upper-thorax wound" really came from the area of the body, or that it is from JFK at all? Of all the things which could be faked, these are the most likely!. And Wecht, of course, has nothing to say about the absence of a slide for the front of the neck. Suddenly he is more interested in trying to sustain the WR than in trying to point out legitimate omissions which do not support it.

The real shocker for me was Wecht's statement that the pix and X-rays "strongly support" the conclusion that JFK was hit by bullets fired from the rear. This man, whose competence we all had faith in, who was, according to some, going to come out with the truth at last, has done more to back the WR than any where before him! For now a critical expert has put his stamp of approval on an untenable conclusion. I don't care what he says those pix and X-rays do; I'm talking about what they cannot do. One thing the can't do is eliminate the possibility of frontal entrance.

The only thing remotely true Wecht had to say was that the movies and 399 disprove the single bullet theory. He had to go through all this to say that? He doesn't even invoke the autopsy films to say this. Instead, he says "the angle of (the bullet's) path through President Kennedy made it unlikely that it could have struck Governor Connally..." Now he has put his stamp of approval on the conclusion that there was a continuous path through the neck. Nothing he saw and probably nothing in existence can do that, and I am not willing to believe that as a competent forensic pathologist he doesn't know this. Such a statement is irresponsible and dishonest.

And then, the coup de grace, in which Cyril so greatly advanced the cause of us average citizens who are struggling to make the world realize that Oswald was not the assassin: "Dr. Wecht said that Oswald could not have fired three bullets so fast on his bolt-action rifle." What business does he have saying this crap? We finally get a real, supposedly honest forensic expert go in to see the pictures and X-rays and he comes out and says they support the WR, but he is sure to mouth off about that which is clearly not his expertise.

There is no telling the harm to come from the irresponsible manner in which Wecht is trying to get access to the brain. It will now be easier than ever to label critics as sensationalists, intent on exploiting gore and hurting the poor family. And I would like someone to tell me what legal basis Wecht has for his demand to get the brain, since the contract under which he got access to begin with makes no mention of the brain and the tissue slides. He was granted access to only that which is listed in the appendix to the contract, which does not include the brain and the slides.

Needless to say, with just about every force in our society working against us, we really need great publicity like this. So, I guess it was a real brainstorm to give an exclusive to Fred Graham of the Times, who has been so generous to us in the past. With the Times' record, I suppose we could expect nothing but fairness and objectivity from them. And now look at the great story we have, quoting Burke Marshall more than it does Wecht, and then quoting Wecht as saying the pix and X-rays support the Warren Report. And what great publicity that ~~MM~~ Graham mentioned Wecht's transportation was provided by the CTIA "that includes...Jim Garrison..."

Hopefully, this will get no more press coverage, or as little as possible.

This is a sordid affair which, instead of making one iota of a contribution to the truth, has added to the lies and irresponsibilities which already abound in the case. It would be an understatement to say we have no need for this type of nonsense, and there is no telling how this can be used to hurt us. Yet, I need I mention that what has happened today, as well as Dr. Morgan's announcement last week, was foreseen and warned of? And, I note in sadness, almost no one even bothered to listen to or think about the warnings because this was our golden opportunity to let the people know the truth.

I sincerely hope this ~~LEADER~~ will not upset you in a way that will hamper your recovery. I know that for me this is upsetting, even if it is not unexpected. The more I think about it, there is hardly anything Wecht could have done that is more reprehensible and just plain disgusting than saying the pix and X-rays "strongly support" the WR.

Best wishes,

cc. Weisberg, Bernabei

Howard

P.S. Just now, at 1:55pm, the local news radio station reported that Wecht had announced that "based on his research" the single bullet theory was impossible, and the Warren Report must be invalid. No mention at all of the pix and X-rays. I presume this was off the wires. Of course, this does not nullify what he said about the autopsy films and, to be frank with you, it makes me a little sicker that he should take credit for the research which disproves the SBT. Quite a man of integrity and scholarship.